

The PREFACE.

accomplish't with prodigious benefit to all sorts of useful knowledge, by the invention of Optical Glasses. By the means of Telescopes, there is nothing so far distant but may be represented to our view; and by the help of Microscopes, there is nothing so small, as to escape our inquiry; hence there is a new visible World discovered to the understanding. By this means the Heavens are open'd, and a vast number of new Stars, and new Motions, and new Productions appear in them, to which all the antient Astronomers were utterly Strangers. By this the Earth it self, which lyes so neer us, under our feet, shews quite a new thing to us, and in every little particle of its matter, we now behold almost as great a variety of Creatures, as we were able before to reckon up in the whole Universe it self.

It seems not improbable, but that by these helps the subtilty of the composition of Bodies, the structure of their parts, the various texture of their matter, the instruments and manner of their inward motions, and all the other possible appearances of things, may come to be more fully discovered; all which the antient Peripateticks were content to comprehend in two general and (unless further explain'd) useles words of Matter and Form. From whence there may arise many admirable advantages, towards the increase of the Operative, and the Mechanick Knowledge, to which this Age seems so much inclined, because we may perhaps be inabled to discern all the secret workings of Nature, almost in the same manner as we do those that are the productions of Art, and are manag'd by Wheels, and Engines, and Springs, that were devised by humane Wit.

In this kind I here present to the World my imperfect Indearours; which though they shall prove no other way considerable, yet, I hope, they may be in some measure useful to the main Design of a reformation in Philosophy, if it be only by shewing, that there is not so much requir'd towards it, any strength of Imagination, or exactness of Method, or depth of Contemplation (though the addition of these, where they can be had, must needs produce a much more perfect composure) as a sincere Hand, and a faithful Eye, to examine, and to record, the things themselves as they appear.

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And I beg my Reader, to let me take the boldness that in this present condition of knowledge, a man may have indeavoured to be, only with resolution, and intentions of imploying his Senses aright, may venture the utility and the usefulness of his services, towards the truth, those of other men, that are of much stronger, and more solid foundations, that shall not make use of the same method by

The truth is, the Science of Nature has been almost only a work of the Brain and the Fancy: It is not now should return to the plainness and soundness of Observations, and obvious things. It is said of great Empiricks, that way to preserve them from decay, is to bring them to the first Principles, and Arts, on which they did build. It is undoubtedly true in Philosophy, that by wandering from the first Principles, and obvious things, the Science of Nature has almost quite destroy'd it self, and is now covered, or continued, but by returning into the same way in which it did at first proceed.

If therefore the Reader expects from me any infallibility, or certainty of Axioms, I am to say for my self, that the Works of Wit and Imagination are above my weak powers, if they had not been so, I would not have made use of this present Subject before me: Wherever he finds that I have made any small Conjectures, at the causes of the things that I observe, I beseech him to look upon them only as doubtful Propositions, and not as unquestionable Conclusions, or as a confutable Science; I have produced nothing here, but what I have put into his understanding to an implicit consent; I am so far from desiring him, not absolutely to rely upon these Observations, if he finds them contradicted by the future Ocular Discoveries of other men, and impartial Discoverers.

As for my part, I have obtained my end, if these Observations shall be thought fit to take up some place in the large Catalogue of Observations, which so many hands are busie in producing, and which have contributed the meanest foundations whereon other

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